

## Horsemyths - Artists statement

The scenes depicted or alluded to in most of these paintings are of various places in Central Australia and the Western Deserts, as first described by Ernest Giles on his 2nd expeditionary attempt to cross the continent from the settled areas along the overland telegraph to the Gascoyne region in Western Australia in 1873-4. This is the traditional country of the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra people's.

The misadventures of the Giles' horse, **Fair Maid of Perth** and her human companions was, for these people, their first contact with white fellas and what would become a cataclysmic shift in their relationship with country, their culture and the wider world. There were clashes, violent exchanges and blood on the sand. Important waters and places of great cultural significance were despoiled. The mystery of what happened to **The Fair Maid of Perth** pales into insignificance against the human tragedies that followed. I have been privileged to be able to visit these places as a guest of the Custodians of this mostly remote and special country and acknowledge their generosity and vast connection to Country.

Giles was a man of his times and his writings are overtly descriptive and wash the whole experience of landscape in a romantic and adventurous way. Many places are given names suggesting a European acardia and his sketches often depict features as far grander and monumental than reality. This has informed the form and palette of my landscapes. I have used the icon of the **Fair Maid of Perth** to populate the landscape with a visitor, an observer, to mark a time of change. The FMOP stencil is based on the only recorded image of the actual mare, as depicted in illustration 27 "The first view of the Alfred and Marie Range" in Giles' book *Australia Twice Traversed - the Romance of Exploration*. In these works I have placed her in the landscape of her misadventures, wherever Giles mentions her in his book.

The FMOP stencil I cut out on the tray of Toyota Landcruiser somewhere down the Canning Stock Route and started leaving spray stencils in the sands of the Gibson Desert, where the image would blow away and disappear, leaving no trace and inviting conjecture and myth making.

FMOP has bolted a few times since and stencils have showed up in street art, and as photobombs in exhibitions around town and eventually in these works.

*For a different artistic perspective on these events I recommend these links*  
[Warakurna Artists The history paintings](#)